

# EXPOSURE OF THE CHARACTER

OF THE

SAV<sub>21</sub> YAJUR-VEDA.

WIL.

BY THE REV. T. WILLIAMS, REWARI, PUNJAB.

*Reprinted from the "Indian Evangelical Review," October 1891*

It is now three years ago that in my report I told of how an abominably filthy part of the Yajur Veda came under my notice. It occurs in the part headed "Bhiwāni." There I tell of my having had a discussion with an Aryā Samājī, the assistant-surgeon in charge of the Bhiwāni Hospital; that this resulted in my examining this particular part of the Yajur Veds; that that part told of the queens in the horse sacrifice being subjected to disgusting treatment in connection with the dead horse; and that while this was going on the Brahmins and princesses gratuitously abuse each other in the most filthy language (every word of which is given in the Veda, for the thing has to be done in these very words at every horse sacrifice, wheresoever, whosoever, and by whomsoever performed). And I quote Professor H. H. Wilson's reference to this same passage, wherein he uses the words "disgusting," "silly and obscene," "revolting impurities." I mentioned too the fact of Ratnchandra's mother, the Queen K'aus'alya having had to undergo all this to effect the birth of the Avatar himself, so expressly stated in the Ramayana, and that it had been read by me fifteen years before, but discredited because to me then it seemed incredible, but that now the reality far surpassed all that that account, taken at its worst, would suggest. I also stated that the S'atapatha Brahmana and Katyayana's Srāuta Sūtra, which are the two authoritative exponents of the Yajur Veda, instead of palliating the obscenity simply increase it, by going into its every detail especially the Srāuta Sūtras. And I concluded my account with these words: "I little thought when purchasing these three books from Quaritch in London, four years ago, that they would prove of such service to me. They place me on a vantage ground from which no amount of quibbling and unscrupulous lying on the part of the Hindus can displace me. I trust I may be enabled to

make a right and effective use of my advantage to its fullest extent. This was my heartfelt wish then, but the *dénouement* that has actually taken place has far surpassed anything I could have hoped for, and that is, that the Government itself has been formally called upon to declare its opinion on this very matter with the result that is has publicly denounced it, and recorded its denunciation in the public records. —

It came about in this way. The Aryā Samāj ought by this time to be quite familiarly known to my readers. It was this would-be reforming body that provoked my reading of the foul passage, and my mentioning it whenever and wherever there was occasion for so doing in the course of my itineration. It is the same body that has precipitated the Government's denunciation on this occasion. In each case the result has been exactly the contrary to that expected by its provokers. In the former case it was most unfortunate for them; in the latter the misfortune has been crushing. But they richly deserved it. Their immediate object was to annoy and disgrace others, especially those called the "orthodox Hindus," i.e., the "unreformed"! Never were people more completely caught in their own trap, hoist by their own pīgād.

I will try to explain the position.

The platform of the Aryā Samāj is to restore what they call the religion of the Vedas, and to abandon what they call its later corruptions. Among these corruptions are idolatry, early marriage, polytheism, and caste.

It is therefore a *sine qua non* with them to maintain that the Veda is eternal and complete, perfectly pure and perfectly wise, perfect indeed in every sense, and that it teaches, God is one. Whatever there may be in the Veda inconsistent with these claims must be either abandoned as charged with being an interpolation, or else falsified as charged with being wrongly interpreted. This abandoning and falsifying of passages of the Veda have been done unscrupulously and unblushingly by the leaders of the Aryā Samāj, and it has been my business, as having the Vedas, and perhaps the only Missionary that has them, to expose this dishonesty. For the most part the members of the Aryā Samāj are the product of our schools, and in proportion as they devoted themselves to the course of study followed in these schools, in that proportion their indigenous studies were neglected. As a consequence, though loud-mouthed as to the perfection of the Veda, they really know nothing of it, except what is second-hand—i.e. they only know what Dayananda Saraswati, their first leader, has written. He knew

Mahidhara better home to the people, some of the Arya Samajis translated his commentary into Urdu, and had it published in the Nagari and Urdu characters, and began circulating this tract, which they called 'Sadhonka Kartoot', freely among the people of Lahore. This was some time about the middle of last year. Enraged at this terrible exposure, the orthodox Hindus drew the attention of the police to this tract as an obscene publication. The police took it up, and prosecuted the authors, the printers, and the publishers in the Court of the Deputy Commissioner of Lahore, Mr Kennedy, on the charge of their composing, printing, and publishing obscene literature. Let me here restate the position of the case.

(1.) The Arya Samajists made and published the tract only with the idea of disgracing Mahidhara and his followers, the "orthodox" Hindus, but with no idea of disgracing the Veda. Their object was rather to clear the Veda itself, maintaining that Mahidhara's Commentary was itself a wicked forgery. They evidently were absolutely ignorant that Mahidhara was strictly in agreement with the S'atapatha and Katyayana's S'rutra Sūtis, and also with the Yajur Veda. In translating Mahidhara, they simply translated the Veda, and therefore disgraced, not the former, but the latter.

(2) The "orthodox" Hindus informed upon the Arya Samajists, holding that it was not Mahidhara that was wrong, but the Aryas' translation of Mahidhara. Him they held to be strictly in accordance with the Yajur Veda and the authoritative exponents of that Veda. In this they showed their ignorance too of the Mahidhara, the Yajur Veda, the S'atapatha, and Katyayana's S'rutra Sūtis.

(3) The truth is that the Aryas' translation of Mahidhara is correct, and so is Mahidhara's translation of the Yajur Veda correct. So that whatever be the character of the tract, that too is the character of the Yajur Veda. So that, as a result, the very Veda the Aryas wished to preserve by throwing over Mahidhara, the very same Veda too that the "orthodox" wished to preserve by punishing the Aryas and justifying Mahidhara, that very Veda has been now publicly declared to be obscene, the *fons et origo*, in fact, of Mahidhara's obscenity and that of the tract Sadhonka Kartoot.

The Arya Samajists were punished as having been convicted of publishing obscene literature. Two were fined Rs. 200 each, another Rs. 100, and the three others Rs. 50.

each. In their defence they urged that whatever it was, it was a true translation of *Mahidhara*, and they brought forward accredited Sanskrit scholars to testify to its being so. They thought that to establish this point would exonerate them, shifting the onus from their own shoulders to those of *Mahidhara*. However, the magistrate had nothing to do with a book that only few could read, and which in itself would never be read by the public; while the tract would be read by thousands of the boys and girls in Lahore, and beyond the confines of that city.

This decision undoubtedly marks one era in Mission work, for me at least.

As might be expected, the defendants appealed, but what has been the result I have not heard, nor has anyone else here in Rewari.\* It is impossible that the decision as to the obscenity can be reversed, though the amount of the fine might be reduced.

As far as my work is concerned, however, a most potent ally has been gained—I do not mean the alliance of Government *qua* Government, but the declaration by the highest authority that some parts of the *Veda* are obscene, and the obscenity such that its publication is a criminal and punishable act.

The following letter from me appeared in the *Punjab Mission News* on this subject:

SIR,—I was shown on Saturday last your issue of the 7th of this month, in which Pandit Ishar Parshad, an orthodox Hindu, has something to say on my article in your issue of July 9th last. The Pandit credits me with making, as he calls them, “two altogether groundless” assertions: 1, That there are objectionable passages in the *Vedic* text itself; 2, That the language of the *Veda* “is so clear that to anyone who knows something of Sanskrit there is no need of any commentary to discover the truth.”

With regard to the former assertion credited to me, I most certainly assert—i.e., I asserted then, and I assert still, and I must ever assert—that there are “objectionable passages” in the *Vedic* text itself; nay, the epithet “objectionable” is far too mild; the word to be used is “abominable.” I dare

\* Since the above was written it has come out that in the decision of the Appellate Court, the charge of obscenity was upheld, but the fines were reduced.

not give, and you dare not print, the *ipsissima verba* of an English translation of the original Yajur Veda mantras in question. Of such passages a Latin translation is usually given, as, for instance, Mr. Ralph Griffith gives of two verses of the 126th hymn of the first mandala of the Rig Veda, and also again of two verses of the 179th hymn of the same mandala. This latter hymn indeed, on account of its objectionable character, he omits altogether in his text, but gives it with the two Latinised verses in the appendix to the first volume. But, even a Latin translation of these scandalous mantras of the Yajur Veda would not, I imagine, be tolerated in a newspaper. But, though anything like a translation cannot be given, it would be allowable to so describe the said mantras as, without using really offensive epithets, should afford to the public some true notion as to the nature of those mantras. I use the word "abominable" therefore, deliberately, and add that the word should be taken in its very worst sense. I would quote here Professor H. H. Wilson's opinion on mantras, but that I cannot just now lay my hand on the volume. It is the second volume of his translation of the Rig Veda, and when commenting on the 162nd and 163rd hymns of that Veda, of which the horse sacrifice is the subject, he takes occasion to refer to the ritual of that sacrifice given in the Yajur Veda, and there records the opinion referred to, than which nothing can be more severe. But though Wilson's work is not at hand, Weber's is and since "Orthodox Hindu" appears familiar with it, I the more readily refer to it. On page 114 of his History of Sanskrit Literature he quotes for chronological purposes part of the 18th mantra of the 23rd chapter of the Yajur Veda. This is one of the "objectionable" mantras. Here, too, I dare not quote Weber's very words, but the nature of them may be gathered from just this one sentence: "Subhadra, therefore, would seem to be the wife of the king of that district, and the benefits of the Ashvamedha (horse sacrifice) are supposed to accrue to them, unless the Mahishi (chief queen) consents voluntarily to give herself up to *this revolting ceremony*." So much for Weber's opinion, and yet "Orthodox Hindu" says that my assertion that the Vedic text itself contains objectionable passages is groundless! Let it be remembered that Weber is here speaking not of Mahishara, or of the Satyapatha, or of Katyayana's Srauta, Sutras, but of the Yajur Veda itself.

But to show that all "Orthodox Hindu" Pandits are not equally blind, I give the instance of Bhagiratha, the Sanskrit teacher of the High school here (Rewari). Upon my showing

him these mantras, he declared that they could have no other meaning than the one I gave. What I was amazed at in his demeanour when translation was given was the absence of all shame and confusion. The ideas were not new ones to Bhagiratha. Truly the Pandit steeped in Hinduism is not easily shocked by matter of this kind. That there are Pandits who do violence to their honesty by denying the foulness of the said mantras, simply means that owing to their learning English (Bhagiratha knows no English) a new light as to religion and morals has broken in upon them.

Now let me turn to the other assertion with which I am credited, viz., "that the language of the Ved (sic) is so clear that to anyone who knows something of Sanskrit there is no need of any commentary to discover the truth." This I repudiate. I made no such assertion. The former assertion I did make, and have justified it above; but this second one I did not make. Turn to my article, and it will be seen that what I did say was, "Apart from any exponent, however authoritative, the Sanskrit of the *Yajur Veda* itself is so clear that to anyone ~~who~~ knows something of Sanskrit there is not much need of any commentary to discover the truth." I spoke then not of "the Ved," but of *Yajur Veda*, and not of its mantras, but of those "the truth" of which is in question. The Pandit's promise is false, so that his laborious argument falls to the ground. I ask myself whether the Pandit thus blundered through carelessness or ignorance. Not through carelessness surely for his argument has evidently cost him much labour. It is through ignorance then. Will he say that *Veda* and *Yajur Veda* are one and the same thing? That the age of the *Rig Veda* is the same with the age of the *Yajur Veda*? He an Englishised Pandit, quoting, apparently with approval, Weber, and yet does not know that Weber says that the *Yajur Veda*, in its present redaction by *Yajnavalkya*, dates from about the third century B.C. (vide page 10) No one maintains so late a date for the present redaction of the *Rig Veda*. Again, in the end of the *Satapatha* (15, 7, 5, 33) it is expressly said that *Yajnavalkya* was the promulgator of *Satapatha Brahmana*, and Max Muller holds (Sanskrit Literature, 1st edition, p. 354) that *Yajnavalkya* was the "author or editor" of both the *Brahmana* and *Sanhita*. Elsewhere in the *Satapatha* it is said that *Yajnavalkya* had discussion with *Janaka*, King of *Videha*. He was the father of *Sita*, Queen of *Ramchandra*, and, therefore the *Ramayana*, if composed at that time as the Hindus say, would be in Sanskrit the same as to style with

the Sanskrit of Yajnavalkya. Now that the Sanskrit of the *Ramayana* is truly modern Sanskrit every Sanskrit reader knows, so that Yajnavalkya's mantras be in modern Sanskrit is, *a priori*, what one should expect

But the Pandit quotes against me the "collection of synonyms, and of especially obsolete words, of which separate interpretations were then given orally," as a proof of the "groundlessness" of my assertion. On the contrary, this is a proof rather of the ignorance of the Pandit, of which I complain, for those lists were expressly lists of *Rig Veda* words, not of *Yajur Veda*. Those lists are called "Nighantus," and to explain them *Yaska* wrote his *Nirukta*, the great *Vedanga*. Can the Pandit point to any word in those lists that is in the mantras (called *Yajunshis*) proper to the *Yajur Veda*, and in those mantras only? He ought to know that *Yaska* illustrates those lists by the *Rig Veda* only, add the Pandit's authority, Weber, says expressly (p 41) that the *Nighantus* and *Nirukta* were aids especially for the interpretation of the *Rig Veda*.

But, Sir, let the *Yajur Veda* speak for itself. The mantras in question are from the 18th to the 31st inclusive, of the 23rd chapter. All the words of these mantras are modern (technically, *laukika*), and not ancient (tech., *naigama*). Nay, there are three of them, *yaka*, *yakah*, and *asakau*, that are positively *Prakrit*, not Sanskrit at all, i. e., they are very modern, and probably belong to the *Prakrit*, *Pali* (*vide* *Muir*, vol. ii p 122).

The ignorance, then, that the Pandit would charge me with is clearly his, not mine, for there is no reason why the interpretation of the *Yajunshis* of (i. e., the mantras peculiar to the) *Yajur Veda* should not be understood by any one who knows something of modern Sanskrit. So that there need be no mystery about whether the said mantras are or are not "abominable." That they are, and no assertion to the contrary, made, whether by "An Orthodox Hindu" or by an heretical *Arya Samaj*, can now avail. The Hindus are no longer the sole arbiters as to the true meaning of the Vedic literature.

